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Soil and Water Conservation Program by the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR)

Interviewed person detail

Name: Gete Zeleke, PhD

Role: Co-leader, Landscape Transformation

Soil and Water Conservation Program in general were started after Ethiopia faced the superior drought between the periods of 1975-1976, with the effort to rehabilitate degraded lands. During such time there was no a former program experience on Soil and Water Conservations in the country. To support this massive degradations, the first Soil and Water Conservation Research Project (CRP) by the Swiss Development Cooperation together with the University of Bern, were established in 1981. Since then, in 3-4 years, seven smaller watersheds were established. The watersheds were all necessarily infrastructured in terms of soil in plot level and catchment for the runoff. In addition, climate parameters were recorded. Experimental flows were also established to check the impact of different conservation practices. Afterwards, great scientific evidence were produced that impacted on producing a guidance including the themes of higher rainfall and low rainfall areas (Guidelines for Development agents on Soil Conservation in Ethiopia; Community Forests and Soil Conservation Development Department (CFSCDD), 1986). And this book explains what kind of conservation practices to be done where, in what kind of land use, which design, by taking the higher/lower rainfall areas and the like.

Water management on the scientific basis, which is the foundation for the water conservation in which subsequently lead to the formulating the guideline for the development agent which includes what kind of conservation started, and how to do it with some more details were incorporated as well.

Production of the guideline has changed the picture for conservation in a good way with some constraints too. One of which was lack of participation of the community. By taking this constraint into consideration, a new guidance book was framed. This new national guideline was framed to involve the community which has 8 steps.

Challenges

- Low level of awareness both at the policy makers level and the community level
- Lack of capacity
- Less tendency
- Lack of management
- Lack of enforcement
- Lack of base line information on the watersheds

Historically, the NCCR were working on the bigger watersheds up to 10,000hectares. In 1988-1989, it was reduced to 1,000-3,000hectares; furthermore, it was reduced to 500hectares referred as community watersheds. It was suggested that the community watershed should be framed possibly at the lowered watershed to the minimum of 500hectare.

Recommendation

- ✓ Check the planning unit, recommended to be between 200-500hectares
- ✓ Go for proper planning along with the community and managing the plan which is a decisive point
- ✓ A single technology would not be suggested, rather integration of many technologies were propsed.